

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

November 2011

US Wheat Associates Crop Quality and Trade Seminar, Amman, Jordan on November 15, 2011– USDA Agricultural Advisor John M. Schnittker accompanied a high-level Iraqi delegation to the recent US Wheat Associates Crop Quality and Trade Seminar, held in Amman, Jordan on November 15, 2011. The Iraq delegation included the Senior Deputy Minister of Trade, Mr. Walid Habib Al-Mosawee, and the Director General of the Grain Board of Iraq, Mr. Hassan Ibrahim Al-Ameri. Iraq has been an excellent customer over the last 12 month purchasing approximately 1.5 million metric tons of U.S. wheat valued at \$530 million. Iraqi officials were particularly interested in the world market price outlook, addressing quality concerns, protein levels and blending characteristics.

Food Safety and Inspection Procedures Training to Cochran Fellows from Iraq: November 5 – 19, 2011, in cooperation with USAID/Tijara, the Foreign Agriculture Service's Cochran Fellowship Program provided Food Safety and Inspection Procedures training to six public sector provincial leaders from Erbil, Iraq. This training, coordinated by Texas A&M University, focused on the administrative structure of the U.S. food safety regulatory system, emphasizing the sharing of duties across several different agencies with common regulatory standards, border inspection and risk based analysis. The fellows met with key U.S. agencies in Washington DC, as well as border inspection sites and a Food Safety Inspection Services laboratory in Texas. The goal of this program was to support the application of WTO-consistent SPS legislation in Iraq.



Market Outreach Activity at the SIAL Middle East Food Show, November 21 – 23, 2011 – As part of efforts to connect U.S. food suppliers and Iraqi importers, the Office of Agricultural Affairs recruited companies to attend the SIAL Middle East food show in Abu Dhabi. The USDA Agricultural Trade Office in Dubai organized a U.S. pavilion at the show with twenty companies exporting U.S. food products. The trip also provided an opportunity to meet with companies based in the United Arab Emirates that supply food products to Iraq and discuss ongoing trade and market access issues. Post also met with the Jenann investment company, which is investing in poultry production operations in the Kurdish region and pursuing other agricultural investments in the Salahadin north of Baghdad.



Visiting Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Ministry of Agriculture, Erbil, Kurdistan-Dec 2011– In early December, in coordination with the U.S. Consulate General, staff from the Office of Agriculture Affairs traveled to Erbil to meet with the Ministry of Agriculture, tour its Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (CVDL), meet with the Deans of Colleges of Veterinary Medicine for the University of Sulaymania and the University of Dohuk, and meet with representatives from the Kurdish Veterinary Syndicate. This was the first trip for Dr. Bob Smith (front), USDA Advisor for Animal Health and Livestock Production, and allowed him to meet (above) with the Director, Dr. Elham Shaboo (right) and her assistant

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(left), of the CVDL and to tour the facilities with ECON Officer, William Quick (center). This facility plays a critical role in the surveillance, diagnosis, control and reporting of infectious animal pathogens for that region and supports the government's efforts to keep livestock healthy and to comply with international trade regulations and standards.



Video Tele-Conference (VTC) to deliver Tech Info to IVMS and IRMA in Iraq – Video Tele-Conference (VTC) is being routinely employed by USDA in Iraq to deliver technical information on animal health and livestock production to members of the Iraqi Veterinary Medical Syndicate (IVMS) and the Iraqi Red Meat Association (IRMA).

Information, in the form of audio-slide presentations is generated by subject matter experts from Michigan State University and World Wide Sires, Inc. and sent electronically to Iraq where it is translated and presented to the members of IVMS and IRMA during monthly training sessions. In addition, these lectures are shared with the Colleges of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine throughout the country so that an estimated 6,000 undergraduate, graduate and post-graduates are able to see them. These VTC lectures enhance the capacity of Iraqi veterinarians and livestock specialists to maximize the genetic potential and production of their animals through better quality veterinary medical services and improved methods of management and nutrition.



U.S. Ambassador to Baghdad presented Dr. Bob Smith the Meritorious Honor Award – On 17 November 2011, U.S. Ambassador to Baghdad, James E. Jeffery, presented USDA Advisor for Animal Health and Livestock Production, Dr. Bob Smith, the Meritorious Honor Award from the U.S. Department of State. This award was presented to Dr. Smith for his significant contributions and achievements while working on the Babylon Provincial Reconstruction Team as an Agricultural Advisor between September 2010 and July 2011. A few of his notable achievements were to support the development of the Private Veterinary sector of that province through

Business Management Training, holding the first Regional Veterinary Conference for over 300 veterinarians and building the capacity for the Babylon chapter of the Iraqi Veterinary Medicine Syndicate to serve its growing membership. In October, Dr. Smith assumed his current position within the Office of Agriculture Affairs, U.S. Embassy-Baghdad.

Personnel Update - There are currently 7 USDA personnel in Iraq at Embassy Baghdad.

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